ON A CLASS OF NON-SELF-ADJOINT PERIODIC BOUNDARY VALUE PROBLEMS WITH DISCRETE REAL SPECTRUM

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1. Introduction

We study the operator L_{per} defined by

(1.1)
$$L_{\text{per}}u := i\epsilon(f(x)u'(x))' + iu'(x)$$

in which f is a given 2π -periodic function having the following properties:

(1.2)
$$f(x+\pi) = -f(x), \qquad f(-x) = -f(x);$$

and also

(1.3)
$$f(x) > 0$$
 for $x \in (0, \pi)$.

In particular it follows that $f(\pi \mathbb{Z}) = 0$. We assume that f is continuous, and differentiable except possibly at a finite number of points, the points of non-differentiability excluding $\pi \mathbb{Z}$. We assume that $f'(0) = 2/\pi$ and that $0 < \epsilon < \pi$.

We consider (1.1) on the domain

(1.4)
$$\mathcal{D} = \{ u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi) \mid L_{\text{per}} u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi); \ u(-\pi) = u(\pi) \}.$$

Remark 1. Of course it is not obvious that functions $u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$ such that $L_{\text{per}}u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$ have boundary values $u(\pm \pi)$; this was proved in [BLM], where we showed that if $u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$ and $L_{\text{per}}u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$ then $u \in H^1(-\pi, \pi)$.

The main results of this paper are

Theorem 2. The spectrum of operator L_{per} is

- (a) real
- (b) purely discrete, i.e. it consists only of isolated eigenvalues of finite multiplicity with no accumulation points apart from, possibly, infinity.

Part (a) has been partially proved in [BLM], where we showed that all the *eigenvalues* (if they exist) are real. The rest of Theorem 2 follows from

Theorem 3. The resolvent $(L_{per} - \lambda)^{-1}$ is a compact operator on $L^2(-\pi, \pi)$ if λ is not an eigenvalue of L_{per} .

Remark 4. The spectrum is always non-empty, as zero is an eigenvalue corresponding to a constant eigenfunction.

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In order to prove Theorem 3, we show that when λ is not an eigenvalue of $L_{\rm per}$ (which is guaranteed, for instance, if λ is not real) then the boundary value problem

$$(1.5) i\epsilon(f(x)u'(x))' + iu'(x) - \lambda u(x) = F(x) -\pi < x < \pi$$

with periodic boundary conditions $u(-\pi) = u(\pi)$ has a unique solution $u \in \mathcal{D}$ for every $F \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$.

The compactness of the resolvent is demonstrated by an "explicit" construction of a bounded Green function G(x,s) such that $u(x) = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} G(x,s)F(s) ds$. The properties of G are established by studying the solutions of an associated homogeneous equation in Sections 2 and 3.

Motivation and scope of the present paper. Our interest in the operator (1.1) with domain determined by condition (1.2) is primarily motivated by [BeO'BSa] and [Da2], where $f(x) = (2/\pi) \sin x$, and therefore (1.5) takes the form

$$(1.6) i\tilde{\epsilon} \left(\sin(x)u'(x)\right)' + iu'(x) - \lambda u(x) = F(x),$$

with $0 < \tilde{\epsilon} < 2$. This equation arises in fluid dynamics, and describes small oscillations of a thin layer of fluid inside a rotating cylinder. From a purely theoretical perspective, the eigenvalue problem associated to $L_{\rm per}$ has recently drawn a substantial amount of attention: see [ChPe], [We1], [We2], [DaWe] and [ChKaPy]. Despite the fact that (1.6) is highly non-self-adjoint, the spectrum of (1.6) consists exclusively of real eigenvalues of finite multiplicity, it is symmetric with respect to the origin and it accumulates at $\pm \infty$. It is also known that the eigenfunctions do not form an unconditional basis of $L^2(-\pi,\pi)$. Moreover, Davies and Weir [DaWe] have recently found explicit asymptotics of the eigenvalues as $\tilde{\epsilon} \to 0$.

In [BLM] we established that the eigenvalues of $L_{\rm per}$ are all real and form a symmetric set with respect to the origin. Theorem 2 above rules out completely the possibility of a non-empty essential spectrum and it answers an open question posed in our previous paper.

2. A naïve Frobenius analysis

Let p satisfy the integrating factor equation

(2.1)
$$\frac{p'}{p} = \frac{f'}{f} + \frac{1}{\epsilon f}.$$

Then u(x) is a solution of (1.5) iff

$$(2.2) (p(x)u'(x))' + \frac{i\lambda p}{\epsilon f}u(x) = -\left(\frac{ip}{\epsilon f}F\right)(x) -\pi < x < \pi.$$

For future use, we also recall the homogeneous differential equation

$$(2.2') (p(x)u'(x))' + \frac{i\lambda p}{\epsilon f}u(x) = 0 -\pi < x < \pi$$

In order to understand how p behaves near x=0 and $x=\pi$ it is useful to consider a simple model. Suppose that near x=0, the function f satisfies $f(x)=2x/\pi$ – this maintains the normalization $f'(0)=2/\pi$. Then (2.1) yields $\log p=\log(2x/\pi)+\pi/(2\epsilon)\log(x)$, whence $p(x)=Cx^{1+c/\epsilon}$ where C is an arbitrary non-zero constant and $c=\pi/2$. Similarly, near $x=\pi$, we can consider a simple model f(x)=1

 $(2/\pi)(\pi - x)$ and obtain $p(x) = \tilde{C}(\pi - x)^{1-c/\epsilon}$. In [BLM] we proved that, under the minimal assumptions (1.2) on f, the following results hold: (2.3)

$$p(x) \sim \begin{cases} x^{1+c/\epsilon} & x \sim 0 \\ (\pi - x)^{1-c/\epsilon} & x \sim \pi, \end{cases} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{p(x)}{f(x)} \sim \begin{cases} x^{c/\epsilon} & x \sim 0 \\ (\pi - x)^{-c/\epsilon} & x \sim \pi. \end{cases}$$

By considering the model $f(x) = 2x/\pi$, $p(x) = x^{1+c/\epsilon}$ in a neighbourhood of the origin and looking for solutions of the differential equation (2.2') in the form $u(x) = x^{\nu}(1 + a_1x + a_2x^2 + \cdots)$ one can establish the asymptotic behaviour of solutions for this model in a neighbourhood of the origin; similarly near $x = \pi$. In [BLM] we show that, under hypotheses (1.2) on f, there exist solutions u of (2.2') such that

$$u(x,\lambda) \sim \begin{cases} x^{-c/\epsilon} \text{ or } 1 & x \sim 0\\ 1 \text{ or } (\pi - x)^{c/\epsilon} & x \sim \pi\\ 1 \text{ or } (x + \pi)^{c/\epsilon} & x \sim -\pi \end{cases}$$

This implies the existence of a unique solution $\phi(x) = \phi(x, \lambda)$ of (2.2'), such that

(2.4)
$$\phi(x,\lambda) \sim 1, \quad x \to 0.$$

The following result is crucial for reducing the problem to the interval $(0, \pi)$; in a sense it plays the same role in the analysis as the orthogonal splitting of the infinite matrix operator in Davies [Da2] in $\ell^2(\mathbb{Z})$ into three operators, hence reducing the problem to a problem in $\ell^2(\mathbb{N})$.

Lemma 5. The solution ϕ has the symmetry property

(2.5)
$$\phi(-x,\lambda) = \phi(x,-\lambda).$$

Proof. Define a function $v(x) = \phi(-x, \lambda)$. A direct calculation shows, thanks to the symmetry conditions (1.2), that v satisfies (2.2') but with λ on the right hand side replaced by $-\lambda$. It also satisfies v(0) = 1. However eqn. (2.2') has only one solution with this property, namely $\phi(x, -\lambda)$. This proves the result.

We emphasize the important fact that λ is an eigenvalue of (2.2') if and only if ϕ possesses the additional symmetry property

(2.6)
$$\phi(-\pi,\lambda) = \phi(\pi,\lambda).$$

In [BLM] we also show that there is also a second solution $\psi(x) = \psi(x, \lambda)$ of (2.2') satisfying

(2.7)
$$\psi(x,\lambda) \sim \begin{cases} |x|^{-c/\epsilon} & x \sim 0\\ |x \mp \pi|^{c/\epsilon} & x \sim \pm \pi \end{cases}$$

Observe that $\psi(-\pi,\lambda) = \psi(\pi,\lambda) = 0$, and that $\psi(x,\lambda)$ blows up when $x \sim 0$, at least when λ is not an eigenvalue.

Consequently, when λ is not an eigenvalue, we can also normalize $\psi(x,\lambda)$ by the condition

$$p(x)\psi'(x)\phi(x) - p(x)\phi'(x)\psi(x) = 1$$
 $-\pi < x < \pi$.

The Wronskian in the right-hand side here is obviously a constant, and below we will always assume that $\psi(x,\lambda)$ satisfies this condition.

3. Construction of the Green function

Now, we are back to constructing explicitly the L^2 solution $u(x,\lambda)$ of (2.2) assuming that (2.6) fails. By the standard variation of parameters technique the general solution of (2.2) takes the form

(3.1)
$$u(x,\lambda) = \psi(x,\lambda) \int_0^x \phi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-ip}{\epsilon f}F\right)(s) ds + \phi(x,\lambda) \int_x^\pi \psi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-ip}{\epsilon f}F\right)(s) ds + A\phi(x) + B\psi(x),$$

where A and B are arbitrary complex constants.

It remains to check that one can choose constants A and B in such a way that

- (a) $u \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$,
- (b) $L_{\text{per}}u \in L^2(-\pi,\pi)$, and
- (c) $u(-\pi, \lambda) = u(\pi, \lambda)$.

It is in fact sufficient, and easier, to check that one can choose constants A and B such that

- (a') $u(x,\lambda)$ is continuous at x=0,
- (b') $i\epsilon fu' + iu$ is continuous at x = 0,

and (c) all hold. Indeed, (3.1) together with (a') implies (a), and together with (b') and (c) implies (b).

Note first, that by (a') and the behaviour of ψ near the origin, one is tempted to take B=0 in (3.1). We shall show that this choice is indeed the right one by the careful analysis of the remaining terms in (3.1).

By the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality and (2.3), (2.4), (2.7) we have,

$$\left| \psi(x,\lambda) \int_0^x \phi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i}p}{\epsilon f} F \right) (s) \, \mathrm{d}s \right|$$

$$\leq |\psi(x,\lambda)| \left(\int_0^x |\phi(s,\lambda)|^2 \left| \frac{-\mathrm{i}p}{\epsilon f} \right|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2} \left(\int_0^x |F(s)|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2}$$

$$\leq C|x|^{-c/\epsilon} |x|^{c/\epsilon + 1/2} \left(\int_0^x |F(s)|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2}$$

$$\leq C|x|^{1/2} ||F||.$$

Here, and throughout the rest of this paper, C denotes a generic positive constant; $\|\cdot\|$ is the standard norm in $L^2(-\pi,\pi)$. Similarly,

$$\left| \phi(x,\lambda) \int_{x}^{\pi} \psi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i}p}{\epsilon f} F \right) (s) \, \mathrm{d}s \right|$$

$$\leq |\phi(x,\lambda)| \left(\int_{x}^{\pi} |\psi(s,\lambda)|^{2} \left| \frac{-\mathrm{i}p}{\epsilon f} \right|^{2} \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2} \left(\int_{x}^{\pi} |F(s)|^{2} \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2}$$

$$\leq C \cdot 1 \cdot |\pi - x|^{1/2} \left(\int_{x}^{\pi} |F(s)|^{2} \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2}$$

$$\leq C |\pi - x|^{1/2} ||F||,$$

so it is bounded. It is also continuous as the integrand is a product of a bounded function $\psi p/f$ and an L^2 function F.

Also, ϕ is continuous at zero, and ψ is not, and therefore (a') holds if and only if B = 0.

To check the condition (b'), it is now sufficient to verify that fu' is continuous at zero. Differentiating (3.1) with respect to x gives

(3.4)
$$fu'(x,\lambda) = f\psi'(x,\lambda) \int_0^x \phi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-ip}{\epsilon f}F\right)(s) ds + f\phi'(x,\lambda) \int_x^\pi \psi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-ip}{\epsilon f}F\right)(s) ds + Af\phi'(x),$$

as the contributions from differentiating the integrals cancel out.

The last two terms go to zero as $x \to 0$, and we only need to check the continuity of the first term. Similarly to (3.2), we get

$$\left| f(x)\psi'(x,\lambda) \int_0^x \phi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i}p}{\epsilon f} F \right) (s) \, \mathrm{d}s \right| \\
\leq |f(x)\psi'(x,\lambda)| \left(\int_0^x |\phi(s,\lambda)|^2 \left| \frac{-\mathrm{i}p}{\epsilon f} \right|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2} \left(\int_0^x |F(s)|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2} \\
\leq C|x||x|^{-c/\epsilon - 1} |x|^{c/\epsilon + 1/2} \left(\int_0^x |F(s)|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^{1/2} \\
\leq C|x|^{1/2} ||F||,$$

which proves (b').

Finally, we need to guarantee that we can choose a value of constant A to ensure that condition (c) holds. Direct substitution, again taking account of (2.3), (2.4), (2.7) gives

$$u(\pi, \lambda) = A\phi(\pi, \lambda),$$

$$u(-\pi, \lambda) = A\phi(-\pi, \lambda) + \phi(-\pi, \lambda) \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \psi(s, \lambda) \left(\frac{-ip}{\epsilon f} F\right)(s) ds,$$

and as λ is assumed not to be an eigenvalue, and therefore (2.6) is not satisfied, we can choose

(3.6)
$$A = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \psi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-ip}{\epsilon f} F \right) (s) ds / \left(\frac{\phi(\pi,\lambda)}{\phi(-\pi,\lambda)} - 1 \right) .$$

This proves the existence of the resolvent of $(L_{\rm per}-\lambda)^{-1}: L_2(-\pi,\pi) \to L_2(-\pi,\pi)$ for each λ which is not an eigenvalue of $L_{\rm per}$. Thus, the spectrum of $L_{\rm per}$ is pure point and real.

Now we proceed to writing down the expression for the Green function G(x, s) of L_{per} . We note that (3.1) can be written, with account of B = 0 and (3.6), as

$$u(x,\lambda) = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} G(x,s)F(s) ds = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} (G_{I}(x,s) + G_{II}(x,s) + G_{III}(x,s))F(s) ds$$

where we set $G(x,s) := G_{I}(x,s) + G_{II}(x,s) + G_{III}(x,s)$, with

$$\begin{split} G_{\mathrm{I}}(x,s) &:= \begin{cases} \psi(x,\lambda)\phi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i}p(s)}{\epsilon f(s)}\right) & \text{if } |x| \geq |s| \,, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise;} \end{cases} \\ G_{\mathrm{II}}(x,s) &:= \begin{cases} \phi(x,\lambda)\psi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i}p(s)}{\epsilon f(s)}\right) & \text{if } x \leq s \,, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise;} \end{cases} \\ G_{\mathrm{III}}(x,s) &:= \phi(x,\lambda)\psi(s,\lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i}p(s)}{\epsilon f(s)}\right) / \left(\frac{\phi(\pi,\lambda)}{\phi(-\pi,\lambda)} - 1\right) & \text{for all } -\pi \leq x, s \leq \pi \,. \end{cases} \end{split}$$

The functions $G_{\text{II}}(x,s)$ and $G_{\text{III}}(x,s)$ are bounded by (2.3), (2.4), (2.7), so we need to look at $G_{\text{I}}(x,s)$. The only scope for trouble in the expression for G_{I} lies in the fact that $\psi(x,\lambda)$ blows up as $x \to 0$. However if x is small then, in the region $|x| \geq |s|$ where G_{I} is nonzero, (2.7) and (2.3) yield

$$\left| \psi(x,\lambda) \frac{p(s)}{f(s)} \right| \le C|x|^{-c/\epsilon}|s|^{c/\epsilon} \le C.$$

Thus G is bounded and hence is the kernel of a compact operator on $L^2(-\pi, \pi)$. Thus $L_{\rm per}$ has compact resolvent and purely discrete real spectrum.

4. Schatten class properties of the Green function

We first recall the standard notion of Schatten class operator. Let T be a compact operator and consider its (∞ -dimensional) singular value decomposition (see e.g. [GoKr]):

$$T = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \alpha_j |v_j\rangle\langle w_j|$$

where the singular values $\alpha_j \geq 0$ and the two sets of vector $\{v_j\}$ and $\{w_j\}$ are orthonormal and not necessarily equal. Here we use the bra-ket notation: $|v\rangle\langle w|u = \langle u, w\rangle v$. For p > 0, we say that T is in the p-Schatten class, $T \in \mathcal{C}_p$, if

$$||T||_p := \left(\sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \alpha_j^p\right)^{1/p} < \infty.$$

Note that C_1 are the trace class operators and C_2 are the Hilbert-Schmidt operators.

Theorem 6. The resolvent $(\lambda - L_{per})^{-1}$ is in C_p for all p > 1.

Proof. Let $G_{\rm I}(x,s), G_{\rm II}(x,s), G_{\rm III}(x,s)$ be the components of the Green function G(x,s). It suffices to show that each of the corresponding integral operators $R_{\rm I}(\lambda), R_{\rm II}(\lambda), R_{\rm III}(\lambda)$ is in C_p .

We start by showing that $R_{\text{III}}(\lambda) \in \mathcal{C}_1$. Indeed, $G_{\text{III}}(x,s) = v(x)w(s)$ where

$$v(x) = \phi(x, \lambda)$$
 and $w(s) = \psi(s, \lambda) \left(\frac{-\mathrm{i} p(s)}{\epsilon f(s)}\right) / \left(\frac{\phi(\pi, \lambda)}{\phi(-\pi, \lambda)} - 1\right)$.

By virtue of (2.4), (2.7) and (2.3), both $v, w \in L^2(-\pi, \pi)$. Then $R_{\text{III}}(\lambda) = |v\rangle\langle w|$ and $||R_{\text{III}}(\lambda)||_1 = ||v||_{L^2(-\pi,\pi)} ||w||_{L^2(-\pi,\pi)} < \infty$, as required.

Let us now show that $R_{\rm II}(\lambda) \in \mathcal{C}_p$ for all p > 1. Let $\Omega_{\rm II} = \{(x,s) \in [-\pi,\pi]^2 : x \leq s\}$, be the supports of $G_{\rm II}(x,s)$. Decompose the characteristic function of $\Omega_{\rm II}$ as

$$\mathbb{1}_{\Omega_{\mathrm{II}}}(x,s) = \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} \sum_{i=0}^{2^{j}-1} \mathbb{1}_{I_{2i,j}}(x) \mathbb{1}_{I_{2i+1,j}}(s)$$

where there are 2^{j+1} intervals

$$I_{i,j} = 2\pi \left[\frac{i}{2^{j+1}}, \frac{i+1}{2^{j+1}} \right] - \pi = \left[\frac{i\pi}{2^{j+1}} - \pi, \frac{(i+1)\pi}{2^{j+1}} - \pi \right], \quad i = 0, \dots, 2^{j+1} - 1.$$

Then

$$G_{\mathrm{II}}(x,s) = \mathbb{1}_{\Omega_{\mathrm{II}}}(x,s)v(x)w(s) = \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} \sum_{i=0}^{2^{j}-1} v(x)\mathbb{1}_{I_{2i,j}}(x)w(s)\mathbb{1}_{I_{2i+1,j}}(s).$$

Let $S_{i,j} = |v \mathbb{1}_{I_{2i,j}}\rangle \langle w \mathbb{1}_{I_{2i+1,j}}|$. Then

$$\alpha_{i,j} := ||S_{i,j}|| = ||v||_{L^2(I_{2i,j})} ||w||_{L^2(I_{2i+1,j})} \le \frac{m}{2^j}$$

where m is independent of i and j. The constant m depends on λ and it is finite as a consequence of (2.4), (2.7) and (2.3). Let

$$(4.1) S_{j} = \sum_{i=0}^{2^{j}-1} S_{i,j} = \sum_{i=0}^{2^{j}-1} \alpha_{i,j} \left| \frac{v \mathbb{1}_{I_{2i,j}}}{\|v\|_{L^{2}(I_{2i,j})}} \right\rangle \left\langle \frac{w \mathbb{1}_{I_{2i+1,j}}}{\|w\|_{L^{2}(I_{2i+1,j})}} \right|.$$

Since the intervals $I_{i,j}$ are pairwise disjoint for a fixed j, the right side of (4.1) is a singular value decomposition for S_j . Then

$$||S_j||_p = \left(\sum_{i=0}^{2^j-1} \alpha_i^p\right)^{1/p} \le \frac{m}{\left(2^{\frac{p-1}{p}}\right)^j}.$$

By the triangle inequality, this ensures that

$$||R_{\mathrm{II}}(\lambda)||_{p} < \infty$$

for all p > 1 as required.

The fact that $R_{\rm I}(\lambda) \in \mathcal{C}_p$ for all p > 1 follows by an analogous decomposition of the support $\Omega_{\rm I} = \{(x,s) \in [-\pi,\pi]^2 : |x| \ge |s|\}$ as the union of disjoint rectangles and a very similar argument.

Remark 7. Let λ_n be the eigenvalues of L_{per} and $\lambda \neq \lambda_n$. By virtue of [DuSc, cor.XI.9.7], the series $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (\lambda - \lambda_n)^{-p}$ converges absolutely and

(4.2)
$$\sum_{j=0}^{\infty} |\lambda - \lambda_n|^{-p} \le \|(\lambda - L_{per})^{-1}\|_p^p$$

for all p > 1. According to the results of [We2] on the case $f(x) = (2/\pi) \sin x$, it is known that $\lambda_n \sim n^2$ as $n \to \infty$. Hence we know that $(\lambda - L_{\rm per})^{-1} \notin \mathcal{C}_{1/2}$. As $L_{\rm per} \neq L_{\rm per}^*$, the inequality in (4.2) can not generally be reverse for any p > 0. The question of whether $(\lambda - L_{\rm per})^{-1} \in \mathcal{C}_p$ for p > 1/2 will be addressed in subsequent work.

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